

## IN BRIEF

# Co-Teaching

## OVERVIEW

Originating in the early 1980's, co-teaching brings together general education and special education teachers to share all aspects of teaching – planning, instruction, and assessment – in an inclusive, heterogeneous, and common classroom environment. The ultimate goal of this service delivery model is to meet the educational needs of all students through an equal and shared partnership.

**Collaborative Planning:** To share equal roles in lesson planning, it helps co-teachers to consider individual areas of expertise and training. General educators, as content specialists, take responsibility for curriculum objectives and assessments. Special educators, as behavioral and instructional specialists, communicate information about students with IEPs and contribute learning strategies that help all students achieve standards. Collaboratively, co-teachers apply their professional knowledge and determine the best methods for organizing the classroom, delivering instruction, and assessing understanding.

**Co-Instructing:** Effective co-teaching requires that both teachers are actively involved in the instructional process. It is important to maintain communication, share responsibility for lesson preparation and delivery, and debrief on the lessons taught. To support shared lesson delivery, it helps to be familiar with the basic approaches to co-teaching. Co-teachers can plan and apply a variety of approaches based on lesson objectives, student needs, available resources, and educator expertise.

**Co-Assessment and Reflection:** Collaborative assessment involves both teachers in the development of assessments that evaluate students' learning. Together co-teachers determine scoring criteria, evaluate student performance, and adjust future plans based on assessment results. Coupled with student assessment, co-teachers examine their own performance as individuals and as a co-teaching team.



Through assessment and reflection, co-teachers refine their practices to become even more effective in their shared partnership.

Co-teaching serves as an opportunity for co-teachers to become more well-rounded and effective with all students. General educators learn more about teaching strategies and meeting the needs of all students. Special educators learn more about the general education curriculum and content delivery. Together, co-teachers have an opportunity to learn about successful collaboration and shared responsibility for student outcomes.

## IN MARYLAND

The Maryland Co-Teaching Network is a collaborative partnership among state, district, and school-based personnel that has developed a common language regarding the implementation of effective instructional and co-teaching practices to enhance the achievement of students with

disabilities and their peers. The Network has received national and international recognition via a presentation and school site visitation to Norwood Elementary during the Council for Exceptional Children Conference held in April of 2011.



# Co-Teaching CONTINUED

## RESOURCES

Friend, M. (2008). *Co-teach!* Port Chester, NY: National Professional Resources.

Co-Teaching Connection: <http://www.marilynfriend.com/>  
This website by leading author on co-teaching, Marilyn Friend, provides information and resources for educators interested in co-teaching.

Mainzer, L. (2010). *Boundless learning co-teaching*. Reston, VA: Exceptional Innovations, Inc.

This guide provides a review of literature on co-teaching, as well as helpful resources and templates for implementing co-teaching.

Mainzer, L. (2010). *Boundless learning foundations: A review of literature on co-teaching*. Columbia, MD: Johns Hopkins University, School of Education, Center for Technology in Education.

Maryland's Co-Teaching Framework- [<http://olms.cte.jhu.edu/20619>]

The Maryland Co-Teaching Framework guides teachers for consistent quality implementation of co-teaching practices throughout local school systems.

Maryland Co-Teaching Reflection Tool – [<http://olms.cte.jhu.edu/20621>]

The Maryland Co-Teaching Reflection Tool supports co-teachers

to examine their practices, recognize their strengths and target areas for improvement.

6 Steps to Successful Co-Teaching – Natalie Marston  
[<http://www.nea.org/tools/17067.htm>]

This article outlines specific steps co-teachers can take to establish a co-teaching relationship.

Understanding Co-Teaching Components – Susan Gately/Frank Gately [[www.mde.k12.ms.us/acad1/ToolKit/Articles/Service\\_Delivery/Gately.pdf](http://www.mde.k12.ms.us/acad1/ToolKit/Articles/Service_Delivery/Gately.pdf)]

This article explains important elements of co-teaching from a developmental perspective.

Villa, R.A., Thousand, J.S. & Nevin, A.I. (2008). *A guide to co-teaching (2nd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

## RESEARCH

In a recent review of the literature on co-teaching (Mainzer 2010), multiple benefits of this service delivery model are described. Among the greatest benefits reported by students, professionals, and families are greater opportunities for students with disabilities, reduced stigma as a result of inclusive settings, and supportive partnerships among professionals (Friend, 2008). As co-teachers collaborate to merge their content and process expertise, they are better able to differentiate instruction, use research-based interventions and problem-solve to find the most effective instructional and behavioral solutions for students (Villa et al., 2008). The result is a productive partnership that benefits all students, including students with disabilities.

Research citations are found in the Resources section of this brief.

## QUICK CHECKS

To establish effective co-teaching practices, consider the following:

- ☐ Supports are in place to facilitate co-teaching (master schedule accommodates co-teaching, common planning time, professional development opportunities for co-teachers).
- ☐ Heterogeneous groups of students are assigned to co-taught classrooms, and students are grouped heterogeneously within the classroom.
- ☐ IEP accommodations, modifications, and specialized instruction are provided.
- ☐ General and special education teachers share equitably in all aspects of teaching, planning, instruction, assessment.
- ☐ Co-teachers allocate time to discuss their co-teaching team's successes and areas for improvement.